

# Remarkable Career of "Black Bart"

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*Charles E. Bolton — alias "Black Bart."*

During many years of service with Wells Fargo & Company and intimate contact with various types of humanity, one of the most interesting personalities with which I became familiar was that of Black Bart, the accomplished road agent of most original methods. Though the courtesy of Sheriff Riecks of Stockton, I have succeeded in obtaining a photograph of Black Bart and a resume of his career. This party's real name is said to C.E. Bolton and he was a resident of [37 Second St. room 40] San Francisco. His practice was to leave his home in the bay city and take the evening boat for Stockton, arriving in the river town the following morning.

Being a wonderful pedestrian, he would usually walk forty miles into the mountains by night time. The next day he would rob a stage and the only evidence he would leave would be a "poem" in which there was some humor and occasionally a vulgar line. He was therefore known as the poetic robber. In the period from 1875 to 1883, when he was finally captured, he robbed many stages, particularly in the mountainous part of California, and Sheriff Tom Cunningham of San Joaquin County was always at the scene of the robbery as soon as possible in an endeavor to locate evidence.

— That was the end of Black Bart's career in stage robbery and it was brought about by the handkerchief which Sheriff Cunningham found. This sheriff served his county nearly twenty-seven years and died in 1900 with a splendid record for bravery and uncompromising honesty.

## Some General Characteristics

Black Bart was a person of great endurance, a thorough mountaineer, who was probably unexcelled in making quick transit over mountains and steep grades. He was comparatively well educated, a general reader and well informed on current topics. He was cool, self-contained, with humorous tendencies, and after his arrest exhibited genuine wit under most trying circumstances. He was neat and tidy in his dress, highly respectable in appearance, polite in behavior, rather chaste in his language, never used profanity, and was not known to have gambled or to have bought pools in races, or every having dealt in mining stocks. He was a Civil War veteran, having been affiliated with Company B, 116th Illinois Infantry. He pleaded guilty to the charge of stage robbery, was taken to San Quentin prison on November 21, 1883, and discharged therefrom on January 22, 1888. A short time after his release he disappeared and was never heard from again.